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Background Paper 12

**SKILL DEVELOPMENT LEAVE AND THE
SEMI-SKILLED WORKER**

Doug Lauchlan

**Skill
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Leave Task
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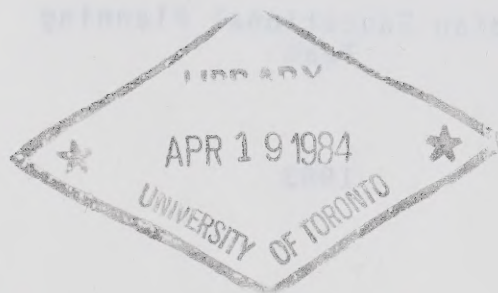
**SKILL DEVELOPMENT LEAVE AND THE
SEMI-SKILLED WORKER**

Doug Lauchlan

Canadian Educational Planning
Team

1983

This is one in a series of background papers prepared for the Task Force on Skill Development Leave. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Task Force or the Department of Employment and Immigration.



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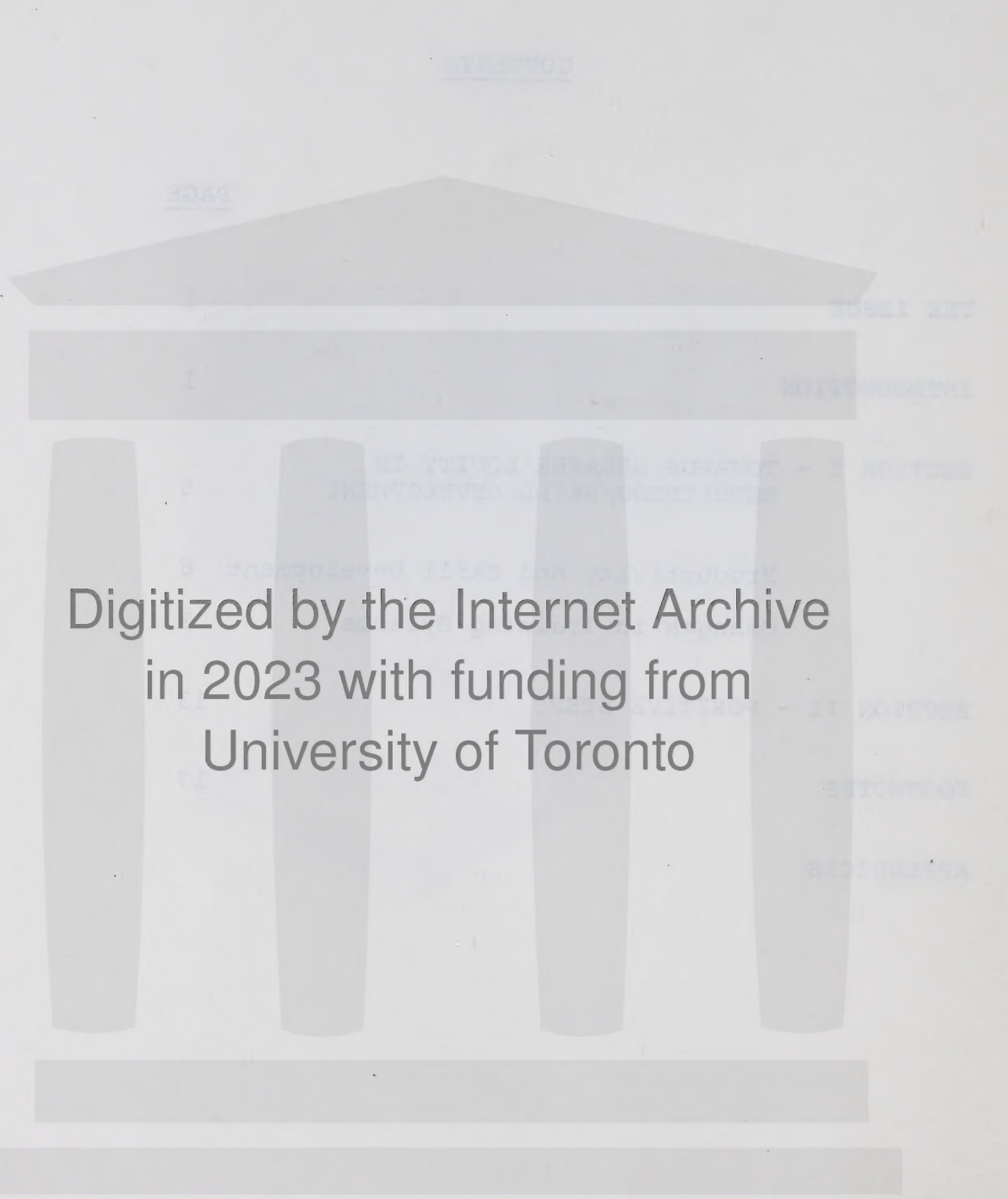
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THE ISSUE

The current educational and industrial training system does not offer major benefits to the semi-skilled, single skilled, or line operational employee. Yet, these people are the largest single employment group, and the individuals most immediately threatened with redundancy by the new computer controlled technology.

This paper will present an analysis of the underlying reasons for the current inability of training and retraining programs to meet the needs of these people, and present a proposal for the development of key resources towards a solution.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of lifelong learning has been around long enough to achieve cliché status among professional educators. It is more than an idea. It is an expression of the practical experience of thousands of Canadians. It is a professional requirement for large groups: doctors, lawyers, accountants, educators. It reflects the experience of many more professional groups who train on a continuing basis along with work experience, for their accreditation. When one adds to this reality, the fact that more Canadians are engaged full time or part time in formal educational experiences than in any other single pursuit, it is easy to gain the impression that we are indeed passing from the Age of Aquarius to the age of lifelong learning.

But that impression would be inaccurate and dangerously misleading. There are certain factors which must be identified, which erode any facile optimism that we are ready to deal effectively with the critical retraining requirements of thousands of adult Canadians.

A recent study published by the Canadian Association of Adult Education¹, based on material gathered by the Gallup organization, demonstrates that the major beneficiaries of the adult education enterprise are people who already have educational advantages. Adult education units of colleges, universities and school boards are the major delivery systems for

adult training. While their programs are generally accessible, often inexpensive and usually managed by people committed to egalitarian objectives, the results are not an equalizing of opportunity.

Client motivation for learning is dependent on previous experience or peer group encouragement. The union movement is a great motivator for further education. These two motivating factors present adult educators with a large market for their services - a market more able to pay for service individually or to attract organizational support for their learning. The combinations of these factors has produced the situation reflected in the CAAE study.

What is true of the efforts of the professional educational community to serve adults is also true of the training enterprise of both the public and private sectors in our economy. Training programs operated by the educational systems as employers have a distinct (almost overwhelming) bias towards the needs of faculty, and secondarily, management staff. Recent information gathered in a Winnipeg study by Doug Lauchlan & Associates² indicated that training dollars spent by the private sector in Winnipeg are focused on management, sales, professional, and high level technical requirements. This impression has been corroborated by the judgment of informed contacts in Ottawa, Toronto and Calgary. Mr. S. A. Bascom, recently retired New Program Development Officer for Mt. Royal College in Calgary, describes the bias as toward "ability training rather than skill training"; that is, the provision of

development opportunities for people at higher levels of the organization, rather than operational people. The Winnipeg response for example, showed that in the conversion from traditional typing and reproduction systems to a computer/word processing environment, the purchasing companies expected training for operational people to be provided by the equipment supplier as a condition of sale. Such "buttons and levers" training was regarded as adequate by the client company. In both the manufacturing and service sector, operational people were expected to know how to operate equipment as a condition of employment, or to be productive in a short time with the assistance and direction of first-line supervisors or fellow workers.

In many areas of the private sector, training is still treated as a perk - as a reward for good performance. In order to qualify, such performance must be noticeable. It is much more likely to be noticeable among management and sales staff than among operational people.

All of these practices are reinforced by the fact that the people who have budget decision power or influence are also the people most likely to be identified by company policy as the persons likely to produce a return on the company training dollar investment. Shakespeare's observation about "all occasions conspiring" would be most applicable to the current trends, and biases of organizational in-house training in Canada.

The current economic climate in Canada has created employment problems that affect Canadians in all levels of

employment: managerial, professional, sales, line operational people - everyone. But the longer term structural issues in our economy indicate a permanent effect that will not be as broadly distributed. Permanent dislocation is likely to occur for line workers in the manufacturing sector and massively, among clerical workers in the service and public sectors. The major problems of retraining are likely to be experienced by the people who are largely untouched by our current adult training efforts in industry and education. A national skill development leave system based on current opportunities will likely miss the people who must access it, not as a matter of career development, but as a matter of survival.

SECTION I TOWARDS GREATER EQUITY IN RETRAINING/SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The use of the word "equity" has certain dangers in this context. It may imply a kind of moralistic approach to the problem, when that is not the issue. But the word does indicate a necessary perspective for the federal government. It is impossible for the federal government to attack the question of skill development unless federal action has a demonstrable effect on the employability of Canadians. In the current environment, that means a special focus on the requirements of people most likely to face dislocation by the application of new technology - the people who are not major beneficiaries of the training enterprise currently.

The problem is not that Canadian industry is too "hard nosed" about training expenditures. It does not apply cost/benefit considerations with enough vigor to the whole of its operations. Productivity improvement is productivity improvement, whether it is achieved in the board room or the production line. The economic consequences may be different, so the investment level may be different.

The problem on the training side is not a lack of skill or imagination. It is that training is not delivered in a form which is applicable to a broad enough spectrum of needs in the workplace. The base of training design has been job entry requirements. The techniques developed for full-time job entry programs still dominate. They tend to focus on educational inputs rather than skill outcomes.

This section will outline an approach to skill development issues which will require modifications both in the place of training in the world of work, and the current operation of training systems.

Productivity and Skill Development:

The declining position of Canadian industry on the individual worker productivity scale has been documented to the point that the impact is blunted by familiarity. In current economic circumstances, the productivity question may have one of two bases: either to trim staff on the premise of increasing profits on current volumes; or to develop increased capacity or versatility from current staff in preparation for an upturn in business. From government's point of view, the latter option is much the more preferable.

The success of the job sharing program offers the federal government an unusual opportunity to encourage, or even require, a significant cross section of Canadian industry to train for the future: to prepare new skills for product or functional diversification, to improve capacities, to prepare for anticipated modernization etc. Renewal of job sharing contracts can include requirements for skill development commitments by both management and unions; and can include a development of training consulting resources to make it happen.

The provision of "leave" is not a necessary component of skill development. The provision of time to train is. Part of

the reason for the general failure of Canadian business and government to address productivity issues related to clerical, operational or line production staff by extensive training is the inability to relate the cost of training to potential productivity gains on an individual worker basis. The potential economic advantage of higher productivity by management sales or professional staff is demonstrable or at least arguable. This is seldom the case for lower levels in the organization, because there is not a correlation between the direct and time costs of training and economic benefits to be gained.

This is often not an indisputable fact so much as a failure of imagination and training design. There is an economic gain from a 20% increase in the productive capacity of a secretary, but seldom does a training department have the time or sophistication to pinpoint what specific skills could be responsible for such a gain; or the capacity to develop training which would be related in both direct cost and time to the value of that gain.

There has generally been a failure to reinforce employee motivation towards self-improvement which has a company benefit. Wage systems for piece work and bonus systems relate to productivity, but they have negatives which do not commend them as worthy of larger advocacy. Many studies question the effectiveness of salary as a motivator, but there is evidence that a lack of recognition for dedication and effort has a corrosive effect. Economic recognition of effort is an important reinforcement.

There is inconsistent practice in Canadian business and government related to support for individual effort for self-improvement. Leave of absence provisions often carry no guarantee of continued employment; particularly for lower level staff. There is little experimentation with income averaging schemes related to skill development leave for the achievement of personal goals by employees - especially in the private sector. Schemes such as the Community College 4/5 programs³ can be managed to the overall economic advantage of the employer, but they have not attracted the attention they deserve.

Those who manage the Canadian workplace must establish a much closer connection between training systems and the short- and long-term objectives of their enterprise with particular recognition of the importance of the productivity of individual workers as a key component of that connection. Trade Unions must see such analysis as critical to the long-term health of the Canadian economy and actively participate in the process.

Governments must not be drawn into massive investments in skill development leave until cost benefit relationships of training to both public and private enterprise in Canada have been much more thoroughly explored. Government can do a great deal to guide, encourage, create incentives for, and in some cases (like work sharing contract renewals) require action as a condition of certain kinds of public support.

The targeted job tax credit program in the United States is an interesting prototype for the application of the tax system as a training incentive. The particular applications of that

program to minority employment opportunities is relevant in other contexts in Canada. The principle that certain forms of training may be treated not just as a business expense, but as an investment in the national interest, worthy of tax relief, is worth much more detailed examination.

The training enterprise in Canada is very impressive when seen in the aggregate of dollars, hours, events and numbers of people. But it is usually too narrow in its focus, often not imaginative enough in its application, and frequently dominated by conventional wisdom and very predictable objectives more relevant to those who seek "more and better" than to those whose very livelihood is under threat in the workplace.

Changes in Training Systems:

One of the reasons why Canadian in-service training opportunities do not commend themselves as pioneering ventures of social relevance is their dependence on the dominant systems of public education. This dependence is partially for a source of service. It is certainly a dependence upon the credentialling system which is controlled either by educational institutions or government-recognized professional bodies. It is also more subtle. Leaders in the workplace in-service training enterprise are the creatures of the educational system. They reflect the same values and are motivated by the same peer opinion group.

The dominant purpose in Canadian education is preparation for job entry professional or trade designation. Most programs

require the full-time attendance of the student or make some adjustments for the part-time learner. The design is dominated by concerns about educational input. The outcomes of the system in skill, knowledge and professional competence are assumed to be guaranteed by the measured ability of the students to master the input to acceptable levels. In spite of the almost universal research result that denies this assumed correlation between success in meeting training requirements and later professional competence, the system persists.⁴

Effective training in the workplace and cost effective personally satisfying retraining on a broad access base cannot happen with this traditional model in forming design. The system takes little real account of previous knowledge and uncredentialed acquired skills. It is not time efficient and, therefore, is not cost efficient. It is not adaptable to different styles of learning (as described in the concept Cognitive Mapping) or different rates at which skill is acquired. The implicit assumption of this Task Force that leave is a necessary component of skill development is a reflection of the dominance of a system where credentials are based on educational inputs. That assumption is correct. It is not an inevitable requirement of competency-based systems. Time is a requirement -- leave may be.

The redesign of skill training based on competency analysis is a critical component of the ability of training systems to be cost effective and meet the needs of semi-skilled or single skilled workers threatened with redundancy by new technology.

Whether competency-based systems lean heavily on DACUM analysis or whether they make extensive use of computer assisted instruction; these are not the issues. The effective application, in whatever form, of the principles of competency-based learning is critical.

Competency-based learning begins with an analysis of the essential skill and knowledge components of any job. The overall skill is acquired by mastering each of the components to an acceptable level of performance. Applied to retraining or skill upgrading in the workforce, this approach allows an exclusive focus on new skills required for higher productivity and makes the considerations of cost effectiveness much more applicable to operational jobs.

The best example of an effective competency-based learning system in Canada is Prince Edward Island's Holland College. The appended material has been selected to give a quick overview of the Holland College system.

Appendix I is a Statement of Principles of STEP (Self Training and Evaluation Program). It is a good concise statement of the basic commitments of the Holland College learning model. Appendix II (Learning Model) is a capsule picture of how the learning system works. The Entry Rating Process, the learner's first step after orientation is described in Appendix III and the performance Rating Scale is appended in No. 4. Appendix 5 is 4 DACUM charts, including one dealing with skills required of the learning manager (teacher). The DACUM analysis is essential to the Holland system. It is both the

detailed skill analysis of a given vocation or trade, and the critical document which charts the learner's progress towards his/her overall objective. Those skills which are color coded are required to an acceptable level of performance for certification; or in the learning manager's case, for permanent employment. Those which are not color coded are optional.

It is not the purpose of this paper to provide a detailed analysis of the Holland College system. Further information about the learning system and the Cognitive Mapping system can be found in the paper submitted to the Task Force by Glendenning and Mason of Holland College. Rather, it is the purpose of this paper to argue that the development of competency-based programs for skill development is an essential component for making retraining and essential skill development opportunities available for that major section of the workforce now largely untouched by adult education in the workplace and the college or university - - the very group most at risk by advancing technology. Further, such an application is more suited to the basic economics of a cost-benefit analysis of such training. Time must be provided, but it is much easier to relate the smaller units of such a system to the schedule of the workplace without facing the requirement of leave for training purposes.

The application of competency-based learning systems to the continuing education requirements of Canada's workplace is an open field. In spite of the magnificent pioneering work done by Glendenning and his associates at Holland College over the last decade on their full-time program, continuing education at Holland College is much more conventional.

SECTION II POSITIVE STEPS

There are a series of actions which should be taken now to focus the attention of the private sector and the professional training community on skill development for those currently in the workforce who are most vulnerable to technological change. These steps are not meant to pilot the concept of skill development leave as such. They are designed to begin to create the necessary pre-conditions for effective and broadly accessible skill development and retraining.

1. Tax credits for training costs in targeted job areas.

The objective is not training for specific jobs nor minority employment. The program should create tax advantages for training given to persons whose jobs are disappearing. Such training could be part of a company severance package; but more hopefully, designed to prepare displaced workers for new assignments by their employers, to master new equipment or a new technology introduced into their work, or to develop new skills to improve productivity as a basis for company growth.

The tax system should recognize such activity as equivalent to approved research and development. It should be rewarded by a tax credit, not just a deduction as a cost of doing business.

The wind down of the job sharing program over the next two years produces an ideal opportunity to take initiatives with union and management to institute approved targeted training programs - - the tax credit system could play a role in easing the

adjustment period during the withdrawal of the UI support for the job sharing agreement.

Such a program will need stronger support than is now available in the development of training resources. That is the subject of the third proposal.

2. Individual initiative for self improvement and skill development needs to be encouraged. Employers should be encouraged to support the use of income averaging tax provisions by employees for training purposes. Employer participation is very important for a number of reasons. The assumption of the financial management of deferred income savings is the difference between possible and impossible for some employees - job protection for participants is a key to success.

The most useful model is the 4/5 scheme available in many community colleges. The normal system is the deferment of 20% of annual before-tax income for four years in support of a fifth year of self-directed activity. There are contractual arrangements about the management of the deferred income fund, interest rate guarantees, mutual agreement about time away, job guarantees and replacement programs.

Such a program would not have extensive use among lower income, semi-skilled people. But it would introduce and encourage a dimension of personal choice and individual initiative which is very important. It would also provide important information about the general effect of self-directed,

personally financed employee leave on the future progress of the employers enterprise.

3. Competency-based, skill development learning resources.

As was noted in the earlier sections of this paper, competency-based learning could be a crucial resource for retraining in the future. The system, to this point, has had very little application in company training programs or formal continuing education programs. It is imperative to proceed with DACUM analysis of new skill requirements, and to develop a body of training materials in support of competency-based learning systems for the workplace.

What is required is a team approach involving management, labour, educational specialists and government. Under this plan, the federal government would recruit a small team of educational specialists thoroughly versed in the essential tools of competency-based learning. The role of the educational specialist is to manage both analysis and learning systems. Management and labour provide most of the information and the learners.

The negotiations for the renewal of job sharing agreements provide an ideal circumstance for the introduction of these future considerations to both management and labour; and the renewal of the agreement an ideal incentive for their participation. This proposal is not dependent on a connection with the job sharing program.

This paper proposes that the federal government create a central task group with the necessary educational expertise, and then enter into a series of management/labour contracts to develop resources related to the needs and opportunities of carefully chosen participating industries. The federal government should bear the cost of the program, and therefore retain control.

Dr. Don Glendenning, President of Holland College, and some of his key associates are an invaluable resource for such a project. Dr. Glendenning is the recognized Canadian theoretician of competency-based systems. He has the rare background of ten years operational experience.

The other lesson to be learned from the Holland College experience is to keep it simple and learn by doing it. The only way to really evaluate the effectiveness of competency-based systems for our retraining requirements is to use them. That is the essence of this proposal: create a simple organization which can move quickly to establish operational systems which can be evaluated.

Let's try it. The cost of failure is not very high. The cost of inactivity in the face of continued growth of the permanently unemployed is incalculable.

FOOTNOTES:

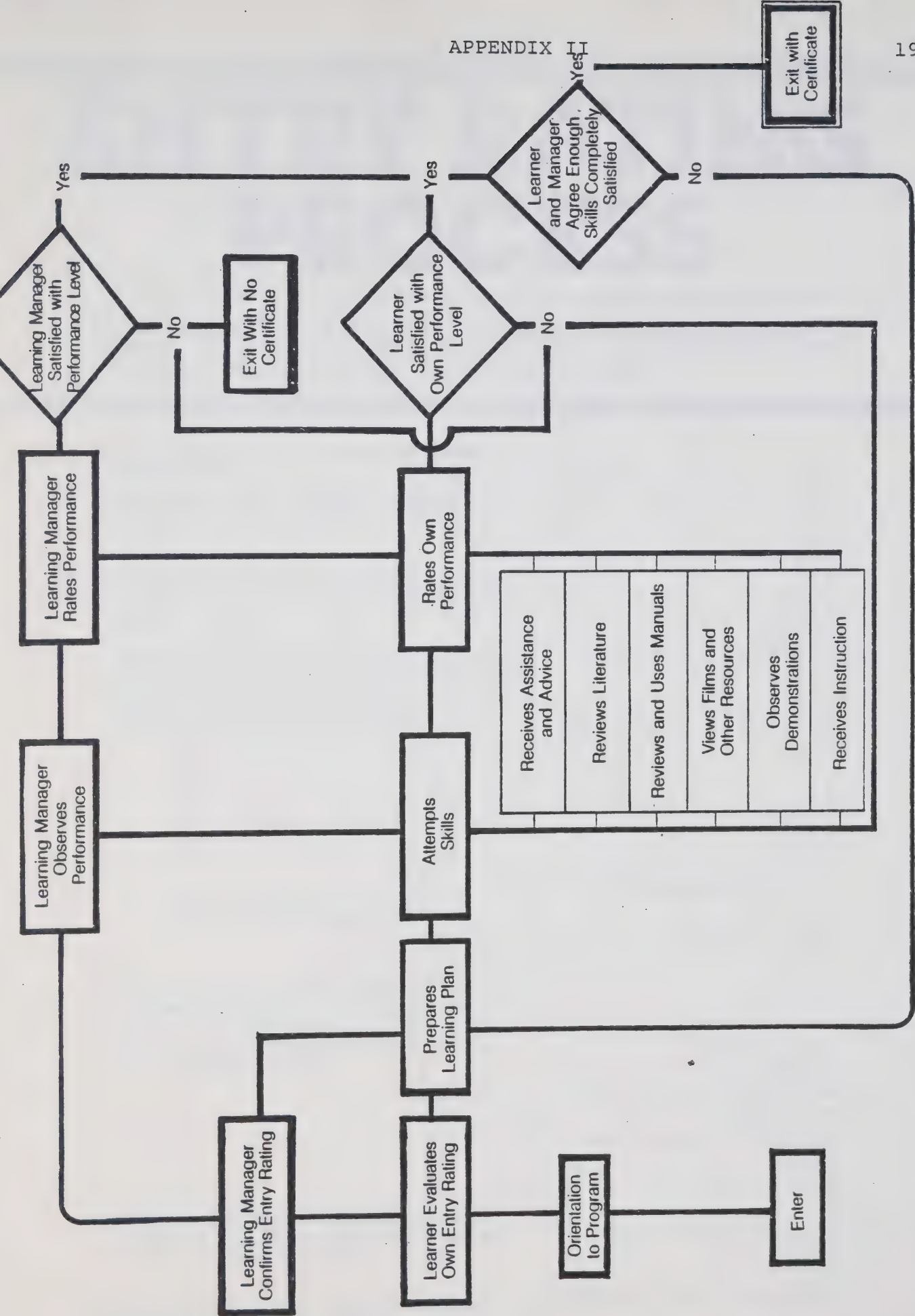
1. From the Adults Point of View: Published by CAAE/ICEA, Oct. 1982.
2. A Feasibility Study Concerning the Establishment of a Centre for Occupational Training - Doug Lauchlan and Associates for the University of Winnipeg, Dec. 1982.
3. The 4/5 system is an income deferment program which allows the employee to spread four years of income over five years and have the fifth year off. Contractual arrangements include provisions for the management of trust funds, guaranteed interest, the return of funds to the employee should he/she drop out of the program, and conditions for leave in the fifth year. The employer reserves the right to defer leave if circumstances make it impossible for the employee to be away in the scheduled leave year.
4. The most frequently quoted study is an American study of medical students which found no correlation between success in medical school and success in medical practice. There was a direct correlation between success in medical school and later success in graduate specialty work. The ability to master-input driven educational programs proves you are a good student. Success in competency-based learning systems prove you have mastered identified skills to measurable proficiency levels.

APPENDIX I

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF S.T.E.P.

- A. Skills required in an occupational field shall be identified by persons in the field.
- B. Students are responsible for their own progress and instructors are accountable for student progress.
- C. Learning shall be stressed instead of teaching.
- D. The role of the instructor shall be to assess, diagnose, prescribe, tutor but not to be the sole conveyor of information.
- E. Programs shall be individualized (Personalized) to the full extent that resources allow.
- F. We shall schedule resource rooms, materials, and instructors instead of students.
- G. Evaluation shall be as realistic and meaningful as possible, in keeping with evaluation in the work environment.
- H. Students shall be able to enter and exit from a program at any time.
- I. Credit shall be given for previously acquired skills.
- J. Ratings are based only on performance.
- K. Students shall evaluate their own performance prior to confirmation by an instructor.
- L. Students shall be able to continue their learning program in a systematic way even after leaving the College.

LEARNING MODEL



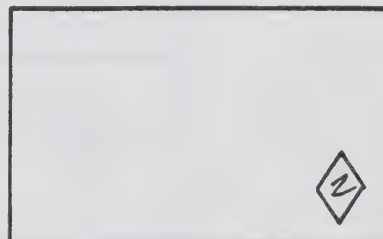
ENTRY RATING PROCESS

Entry Ratings identify a level of skill proficiency of the learner entering a program. These are not considered official Holland College ratings until the learner has demonstrated proficiency of the skill.

1. All learners will go through an entry-rating process. (ERP)
2. The ERP consists of a learner self-evaluation of the skill on the chart.
3. An entry rating will be recorded, with a diamond, on the learner's chart by the learner.
4. When the entry rating interviews are completed, acknowledged entry ratings will have diamonds around them on the learner's chart and on the master chart.

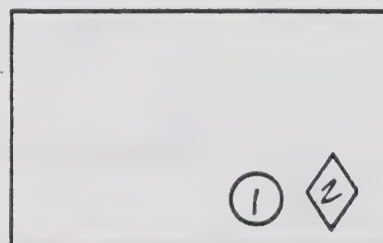


learner's chart



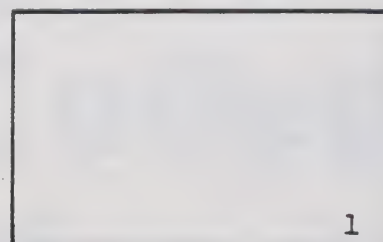
master chart

5. When the learner demonstrates a level of competency on an acknowledged entry-rating skill, the level is recorded and confirmed in a circle along with the date and the instructor's initials.



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6. Transcripts or Records of Achievement will only have final, confirmed ratings without circles or instructor's initials.
7. Entry ratings are not recorded on Transcripts or Records of Achievement.



Rate Your Performance

C	CAN PERFORM THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY AND CAN LEAD OTHERS IN PERFORMING IT.
4 B	CAN PERFORM THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY WITH INITIATIVE AND <u>ADAPTABILITY TO SPECIAL PROBLEM SITUATIONS.</u>
A	CAN PERFORM THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY WITH MORE THAN <u>ACCEPTABLE SPEED AND QUALITY.</u>
3	CAN PERFORM THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY <u>WITHOUT ASSISTANCE AND/OR SUPERVISION.</u>
2	CAN PERFORM THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY BUT REQUIRES <u>PERIODIC ASSISTANCE AND/OR SUPERVISION.</u>
1	CAN PERFORM SOME PARTS OF THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY BUT REQUIRES ASSISTANCE AND/OR SUPERVISION TO PERFORM THE ENTIRE SKILL.

The Holland College Way

APPENDIX V

DACUM CHARTS

LEARNING MANAGEMENT

Name _____

4	CAN PERFORM THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY AND CAN LEAD OTHERS IN PERFORMING IT
3	CAN PERFORM THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY WITH MINOR ASSISTANCE AND SUPERVISION
2	CAN PERFORM THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY BUT REQUIRES PERIODIC ASSISTANCE AND SUPERVISION
1	CAN PERFORM SOME PARTS OF THIS SKILL SATISFACTORILY BUT REQUIRES ASSISTANCE TO PERFORM THE ENTIRE SKILL

1. The 1-4 scale is based on individual performance. The individual is rated as follows:
 1 - Needs the most help and requires constant supervision
 2 - Needs some help and requires periodic supervision
 3 - Needs little help and requires occasional supervision
 4 - Performs the skill independently and requires no supervision

Instructor _____

Date _____

A letter of reference attesting to the individual's aptitude, personality, and work habits, is to be filled out by the instructor's office.

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TO OCCUPATIONAL REALITIES	TO CHART	TO TRAINING PROCESS	TO IDENTIFY & DESCRIBE EXTERNAL RESOURCES	TO IDENTIFY & DESCRIBE EXTERNAL RESOURCES	TO IDENTIFY & DESCRIBE EXTERNAL RESOURCES	TO IDENTIFY & DESCRIBE EXTERNAL RESOURCES	TO IDENTIFY & DESCRIBE EXTERNAL RESOURCES
ORIENT LEARNERS TO PROGRAM & SYSTEM	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
EVALUATE LEARNING PROGRESS	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
CREATE & MAINTAIN ENVIRONMENT	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
ASSIST LEARNERS IN OCCUPATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
COACH LEARNERS IN SELF-LEARNING	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
DEVELOP LEARNING MATERIALS	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
COMMUNICATE WITH LEARNERS	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
COMMUNICATE WITH STAFF IN TRAINING ENVIRONMENT	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
INTERACT WITH THE COMMUNITY	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
DEVELOP PERSONAL COMPETENCIES	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART
PERFORM ADMINISTRATIVE OR RELATIONSHIP FUNCTIONS	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART	TO CHART

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